

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ACDA-10 SSM-05 IO-13 EUR-12 AF-10

TRSE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-07 COME-00

SIL-01 LAB-04 MCT-01 ERDA-07 OES-07 AID-05 FEAE-00

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R 031138Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2927

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 2809

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN MEDIA SUMMARY FOR APRIL 30-MAY 2, 1977

1. MEDIA LED WITH STORIES ON KHADDAM'S TOUR OF GULF STATES STRESSING CENTRALITY OF SYRIA TO ARAB EFFORTS FOR ME SOLUTION, AND MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS WHICH EMPHASIZED REGIME'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR LABOR UNDER ASAD. ARTICLES ON KHADDAM'S TOUR REPORTED HE BRIEFED ARAB LEADERS ON RESULTS ASAD'S MOSCOW VISIT AND KHADDAM'S TALKS IN WASHINGTON.

2. MAY DAY RALLY. BAATH PARTY DEPSEC GEN ABDULLAH AL-AHMAR
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DELIVERED MAY DAY SPEECH WHICH CONTAINED NUMBER OF REFERENCES TO SYRIA'S DESIRE FOR ME PEACE INTERLACED WITH CRITICISM OF "INRAEL'S INTRANSIGENT ATTITUDE." SEVERAL EDITORIALS PRAISED REGIME'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE WORKERS. AHMAD SHUKRI IN AL-BAATH ENUMERATED INDUSTRIES WHICH HAD UNDERGONE LARGE-SCALE EXPANSION AND ASSERTED THAT MANY NEW PROJECTS WOULD "SOON BE TURNED OVER TO THE WORKERS."

HOWEVER, HE EXHORTED SYRIAN LABORERS TO AVOID NEGLIGENCE AND WASTEFULNESS, SO THAT NEW PROJECTS WOULD NOT BECOME MONEY LOSERS WHOSE COSTS ULTIMATELY WOULD BE BORNE BY THE PEOPLE. MINECON IMADI GAVE TELEVISED INTERVIEW IN WHICH HE CITED STATISTICS TO SUPPORT "YOU NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD" THEME. HE CLAIMED AN ALMOST THREE-FOLD INCREASE IN PER CAPITA INCOME (NOT ALLOWING FOR INFLATION) BETWEEN 1970 AND 1976. HE SAID THAT 1.2 BILLION LS (\$308 MILLION) HAD BEEN INVESTED IN PUBLIC SECTOR. SUBSIDIES FOR ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES AMOUNTED TO ONE BILLION LS (\$256 MILLION) ANNUALLY BUT HE DENIED ANY INTENTION TO INCREASE TAXES.

3. LEBANON. PRESS FRONT-PAGED MAY 2 ADF COMMUNIQUE EXPLAINING WOUNDING OF FOUR INDIVIDUALS IN BEIRUT AND KILLING OF FIFTH WHEN CAR RAN ADF ROADBLOCK. STRONGLY WORDED AL-BAATH EDITORIAL BY AMID AL-KHULI ACCUSED PERPETRATORS OF INCIDENT OF WORKING TO DISRUPT LEBANON'S FRAGILE PEACE BY PLANTING EXPLOSIVES IN AUDITORIUM WHERE MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR KAMAL JUMBLATT SCHEDULED. AL-KHULI WAS CAREFUL TO REFER TO THOSE INVOLVED AS SMALL ISOLATED GROUP OF EXTREMISTS AND DID NOT LINK THEM WITH ANY IMPORTANT FACTION IN LEBANON. AS IN PREVIOUS EDITORIALS HE CONFIDENTLY ASSERTED THAT ADF WOULD BE ABLE TO THWART ANY FURTHER SUCH INCIDENTS.

4. SPEAKING ON LEBANESE RECONSTRUCTION, THAWRA COLUMNIST WRITING ON APRIL 30 DECLARED LEBANON WOULD CONCENTRATE ON REBUILDING ARMY NOW THAT SARKIS HAD FILLED NUMBER OF TOP-LEVEL GOVERNMENTAL POSITIONS. HE ALSO PREDICTED UNCLASSIFIED

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PROGRESS IN STRENGTHENING THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND JUDICIARY. EDITORIAL ENDED WITH ASSERTION THAT "AS LONG AS SARKIS EXPEDITING PROGRESS" THERE ROOM FOR OPTIMISM. SAME DAY THAWRA CARRIED INTERVIEW WITH LEBANESE NATIONAL FRONT LEADER KAMAL SHATILA WHO CLOSE TO SARG. SHATILA SAW SOLUTION FOR SOUTH LEBANON BASED ON ESTABLISHING GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE LEBANESE EXECUTIVE AND THE PLO AND PRESIDENT'S "CONTAINMENT" OF PARTITION SCHEMES. HE STATED IT WAS IMPORTANT TO SEND LEBANESE FORCE TO THE SOUTH AND "ELIMINATE PARTIAL OCCUPATIONS" OF VILLAGES THERE (COMMENT: NOT CLEAR WHICH OCCUPIERS HE HAD IN MIND). HE FURTHER CALLED FOR END TO COLLABORATION WITH ISRAEL "CONDUCTED BY SOME INDIVIDUALS," AND BLAMED ISRAEL FOR WHAT OCCURED IN THE SOUTH.

4. ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR POTENTIAL. LONG FRONT PAGE ARTICLE APPEARED APRIL 30 IN THAWRA WHICH CHARGED THAT RECENT STORIES ABOUT ALLEGED DIVERSION 200 TONS URANIUM TO ISRAEL WERE INSTIGATED BY ISRAELIS THEMSELVES IN FURTHER

ATTEMPT TO INTIMIDATE ARABS. STORY TERMED
AFFAIR "POLITICAL BLACKMAIL." EDITORIAL ON SUBJECT
APPEARED FOLLOWING DAY IN TISHRIIN. IT NOTED ISRAEL DID
NOT SIGN NPT AND WARNED THAT ISRAEL PLAYING WITH FIRE.
IT ASKED RHETORICALLY IF US WITH ALL ITS INTERESTS IN AREA
COULD PERMIT ISRAEL TO USE SUCH WEAPONS AND DECLARED THAT
ARABS ALSO CAPABLE OF ACQUIRING NUCLEAR ARMS. COLUMNIST
ALLUDING TO ASAD'S RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER HIS MEETING
WITH BRITAIN'S FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN, POINTED OUT THAT ASAD
DECLARED SYRIA WOULD OBTAIN THESE WEAPONS IF ISRAEL DOES.
HE CONCLUDED THAT ARAB'S HAD OPTED FOR JUST AND LASTING
PEACE.

5. ARAB UNY. SEVERAL EDITORIALS CALLED FOR
BETTER COORDINATION AND COOPERATION AMONG ARAB STATES AND
WERE CLEARLY AIMED AT ARAB OIL-PRODUCERS ALTHOUGH COUCHED
IN MORE DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE THAN MEDIA OUTBURST AGAINST ARAB
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DONOR STATES IN EARLY MARCH. BAATH COLUMN DECLARED SYRIA
EARNEST IN WIDE-SCALE POLITICAL ACTIVITY AIMED AT UNIFYING
ARAB POSITION TO COPE WITH ALL FUTURE POLITICAL AND MILITARY
CONTINGENCIES. SYRIA, IT CLAIMED, HAD ACHIEVED SOME SUCCESS
BUT HAD NOT, AS YET, ATTAINED THE DESIRED LEVEL OF UNITY.
TISHRIIN COLUMN ASSERTED THAT CHANCES FOR ARAB SUCCESS GREATLY
INCREASED AS UNITY GROWS AND ARAB WEALTH, "AT FOREFRONT
OF WHICH IS OIL", PUT AT DISPOSAL OF ARAB POLICY.
COLUMN WARNED THAT ZIONISM THREATENED ALL ARAB STATES
"NO MATTER HOW GEOGRAPHICALLY REMOTE".
MURPHY

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